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ABSTRACT

Because of the syntactic differences between Spanish and Quechua, Quechua-speaking children must make major word order adjustments to learn the Peruvian Spanish taught in school. This study investigates whether the order or time sequence in which these changes are adopted reflects any general constraint, or is in any way predicted by a theory of linguistic change. The acquisition process is illustrated with examples from early stage and later stage Peruvian Spanish. The examples indicate that the child makes initially two major syntactic changes -- these involve the order of the main verb in a sentence and the order of the head noun in the genitive phrase. Results indicate that linguistic innovations are constrained by the observance of linguistic universals. The word order acquisition stages postulated have important implications in the study of variability in Peruvian Spanish. The variability is directly dependent upon the degree of influence in Quechua. Features characterizing each stage may be kept as variable styles in the adult's speech, along with the standard norms, which may be used as a formal style. (Author/JK)

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Syntactic universals and the acquisition of Spanish word order by Quechua-speaking children

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1. Introduction.

Small Quechua-speaking children in Perú impose the syntax of their native tongue on their Spanish speech, in particular, the Quechua phrase and clause word orders. This phenomenon has been observed, among others, by Minaya 1978, Miranda 1978, and is consistent with the general patterns reported by Cerrón-Palomino 1976. Typologically, Quechua is a postpositional V-final language while Spanish is almost its polar type, being a prepositional V-medial language. Their fusion in the speech of Peruvian bilingual speakers gives rise to an unusual hybrid variety which preserves the Quechua word order but adopts prepositions.

To acquire the prestige Spanish taught in school the child needs to make major word order adjustments. In this study we investigate the question of whether the order (time sequence) in which these changes are adopted reflects any general constraint, or is in any way predicted by a theory of linguistic change.

To answer these questions we constructed 2 hypotheses which are compatible with the two current opposing theories of linguistic change. These are the Trigger-chain theory, advocated by Lehmann and Vennemann in the early 70's, and the principle of Universal Consistency put forward by Hawkins 1979. The hypotheses were examined in the light of recorded speech by 5-, 7- and 9-year old bilingual children. The percentages of occurrence of the relevant word order patterns lead to the conclusion that the emergence of the clause Verb + Object order precedes that of the Noun + Modifier order in the noun phrase. These results are consistent with the Universal Consistency Hypothesis, but contradict the trigger-chain theory.

2. Peruvian Spanish.

The initial Spanish speech of Quechua-speaking children in Perú has clause and phrasal order as in their native language. Unlike standard Spanish, the main V is placed finally in the clause, while the head N is characteristically put at the end of its phrase. Examples (1)-(6) illustrate these patterns of the hybrid speech:

		O			V	
(1)	Su	bebito	también	tenía.		'She also had her little baby.'
	her	little-baby	also	she-had		
		O			V	
(2)	Volatín		antes		hacían	'They used to do somersaults.'
	somersault		before		they-did	
		GEN			N	
(3)	De mi tía Rosalinda		su		hijito	'My aunt Rosalinda's little son.'
	of my aunt		her		little son	
		GEN			N	
(4)	de una señora		su		frazada	'a woman' blanket.'
	of my aunt		her		blanket	
		ADJ	N			
(5)	tu	chiquito	oveja			'your small sheep.'
	your	small	sheep			
		ADJ	N			
(6)	todo	frío	agua			'all cold water.'
	all	cold	water			

The corresponding standard Spanish patterns would have the main V before its Object and the head N before the genitive and also before the attributive adjective.

In the process of acquiring the Spanish norm, their speech goes through intermediate stages that gradually approximate their goal. Thus, they adopt Subject-V-Object and N-Genitive orders without discarding the SOV and GEN-N orders of their earlier speech. Examples with mixed features are (7)-(10):

	V		N		GEN		
(7)	Murió	su	primo		de mi mamá.		'My mother's cousin died.'
	died	her	cousin		of my mom		
		N		GEN	V	S	
(8)	Sus	bultos	de la	señora	carga	el tauca	'The porter carries the lady's bundles.'
	her	bundles	of the	lady	carries	the porter	

		V	N	ADJ		
(9)	Ahí	están	casitas	chiquitas	ahí	'There are the small houses.'
	There	are	houses	small	there	
			N	ADJ	V	
(10)	Ahí	el	patito	chiquito	está	'The small duck is there.'
	There	the	duck	small	is	

In addition, bilingual children produce sentences combining the 2 clause orders in the pattern SVOV, where the verb is reduplicated, as shown in (11-12):

	V		O	V	
(11)	Conozco	a los	cabritos	conozco	'I know the little goats.'
	I-know	the little	goats	I-know	
	V		O	V	
(12)	Había	como una	carretita	había	'There was like a small
	There-was	like a small	cart	there-was	cart.'

We may start by assuming 2 distinct stages in these children's Spanish speech: EARLY STAGE and LATER STAGE PERUVIAN SPANISH (henceforth PS). Their characteristics may be compared with those of Quechua and Standard Spanish, as shown in (13):

(13)	QUECHUA:	EARLY STAGE PS:	LATER STAGE PS:	STANDARD SP:
	SOV	SOV	SOV/SVO	SVO/(VSO/VOS)
	POST	PREP	PREP	PREP
	GEN-N	GEN-N	GEN-N/N-GEN	N-GEN
	ADJ-N	ADJ-N	ADJ-N	ADJ-N/N-ADJ

This display indicates that the child makes initially 2 major syntactic changes; these involve the order of the main V in a sentence and the order of the head N in the genitive phrase. An important question arises here: Are these word order changes acquired simultaneously or does one precede the other? These questions may be answered in the light of a theory of linguistic change.

3. Two theories of linguistic change.

Two opposing theories have been proposed to account for linguistic change, the 'trigger-chain' hypothesis advocated by Lehmann and Vennemann in the 70's,

and the principle of Universal consistency formulated by Hawkins (1979). The trigger-chain theory holds that lingustic change must spring from an initial violation of a synchronic universal. This violation would in turn trigger subsequent changes aimed at restoring consistency with the putative universals. The Universal-consistency Hypothesis opposes this view by claiming that linguistic change must take place within the bounds imposed by synchronic universals, thereby excluding violations of them at any stage in linguistic evolution.

Three possibilities may be considered in the bilingual context of language acquisition in Perú. First, the acquisition of SVO order precedes that of N-GEN order; second, the latter is acquired before the former, and third, the two orders appear simultaneously. Of these alternatives, only the second one is compatible with the universal-violation hypothesis. This is so because, there appears to be no language having SOV order with postnominal genitive but prenominal adjective, as indicated in (14b). Thus, the universal-violation hypothesis predicts that the order of acquisition is N-GEN first, as shown in (14) as this would provide the initial violation needed to trigger the adoption of other characteristics.

(14)

(a)	(b)		(c)
SOV	SOV	2 →	SVO
PREP	PREP		PREP
GEN-N	1 → *N-GEN		N-GEN
ADJ-N	ADJ-N		ADJ-N
(Amharic)	(No languages)		(Modern Greek, Dutch, Icelandic, Slavonic, Efik, Krefj, Maya)

As indicated in (14), there is only one known language (Amharic) with the characteristics listed under (a), which represents the EARLY STAGE PS, and there are several languages comparable to the later stage indicated under (c). But no languages attest for the combination of features under (b) (cf. Appen-

dix II in Greenberg 1966, Hawkins 1979). The order of acquisition predicted by Hawkins' Principle of Universal Consistency is that where the adoption of SVO order precedes that of N+GEN order, as shown in (15):

(15)

(a)		(b)		(c)
SOV	1 →	SOV/SVO		SVO
PREP		PREP		PREP
GEN-N		GEN-N	2 →	GEN-N/N-GEN
ADJ-N		ADJ-N		ADJ-N
(Amharic)		(Swedish, Danish)		(Modern Greek, Dutch, Icelandic, Slavonic, Erik, Krefj, Maya)

Every stage in this sequence of changes is consistent with syntactic universals, as indicated by the occurrence of attested languages with the characteristics distinguishing each hypothesized stage. Notice, moreover, that (15) presupposes that each change proceeds via a doubling stage, a characteristic predicted by Hawkins' Doubling Acquisition Hypothesis, henceforth (DAH).

The DAH asserts that linguistic innovation follows the pattern represented in (16), where P stands for any language property and minus for its absence:

(16) $-P > -P/P > P$

The DAH favors the alternative described in (15) over one where the two innovative word order changes are developed simultaneously. If they were, doubling could not easily be assumed for the intermediate stage. The parallel development is shown in (17):

(17)

(a)		(b)
SOV	→	SVO
PREP		PREP
GEN-N	→	N-GEN
ADJ-N		ADJ-N
(Amharic)		(Modern Greek, Dutch, Icelandic, Slavonic Efik, Krefj, Maya)

Doubling in (17b) i.e. SOV/SVO, instead of the single orderings there posited, would allow for the possibility of occurrence of SOV order with postnominal genitive but prenominal adjectives, a conjunction of features not found in any existing language, as previously pointed out in (14). The only way to have doubling in this alternative would require assuming the exclusive co-occurrence of SVO with N-GEN sequences and that of SOV order with GEN-N patterns, respectively. However, it seems highly improbable that children's speech could be so restrictively consistent. The data also excludes this alternative since the GEN-N word order may be observed to co-occur both with SVO and SOV sentence patterns, as illustrated by examples (18) and (19):

		GEN		N		V	O	
(18)	De mi tía	Rosalinda		su hijito		tiene	una	tortuguita
	of my aunt	Rosalind		her small son		has	a	little turtle

'My aunt Rosalinda's small son has a little turtle.'

	GEN			N	O	V	
(19)	De ese chiquito		su	perro	diferente	es.	
	Of that little boy		his	dog	different	is	

'The little boy's dog is different.'

4. The quantitative analysis.

To test the two contrasting hypotheses we examined the frequency of occurrence of the sentence patterns OV, VO and VOV, and the noun phrase patterns GEN-N/N-GEN, and ADJ-N/N-ADJ, in the speech of bilingual children.

The sample for this study consisted of nine hours of both elicited and spontaneous tape-recorded conversations from nine bilingual children clustered evenly in 3 age groups: (five-, seven- and nine-year olds), who were born and raised in one of four most-populated cities of the Peruvian Highlands; Cuzco, Ayacucho, Huaraz and Puno. The data was obtained from one of three distinct social contexts: (1) an adult interviewing a child, (2) a child interacting with one or two peers, or (3) child-adult-peers interaction.

We found the percentages of occurrence of the 3 sentence patterns, which may be characterized as V-Final (as in Quechua), V-medial/V-final (the hybrid pattern with duplicated Verb) and V-medial (as in Spanish), as shown in the table given in (20).

(20)

	#	O V	V O V	V O	Total
Age 5	3	38%	25%	37%	502
Age 7	3	32%	16%	52%	526
Age 9	3	25%	8%	67%	547

These percentages indicate that the 5-year-old child utters almost comparable portions of Quechua V-final patterns and Spanish V-medial orders, with a considerable fourth portion of the hybrid pattern bearing the duplicated verb. However, at age 7, there is a clear predominance of the Spanish patterns with a decline of the earlier patterns.

The frequency of occurrence of Quechua prenominal genitives as opposed to the Spanish postnominal ones, indicates that the acquisition of the latter is accomplished later than the Spanish clause orders. Compare the results indicated in the table given in 21:

(21)

	#	GEN-N	N-GEN	Total
Age 5	3	64%	36%	32
Age 7	3	56%	44%	26
AGe 9	3	33%	67%	28

Quite clearly the 5-year-old child has a strong predominance of the Quechua GEN-N order that persists, though to a much lesser extent, at age 7, stages in which the Spanish SVO clause order has already gained control. By contrast the Spanish N-GEN order shows strong predominance only at age 9.

The frequency of occurrence of Quechua prenominal vs. Spanish postnominal adjective position is shown in the table given in (22):

(22)

#	ADJ-N	N-ADJ	Total
Age 5	3	91%	9%	11
Age 7	3	60%	40%	15
Age 9	3	38%	62%	47

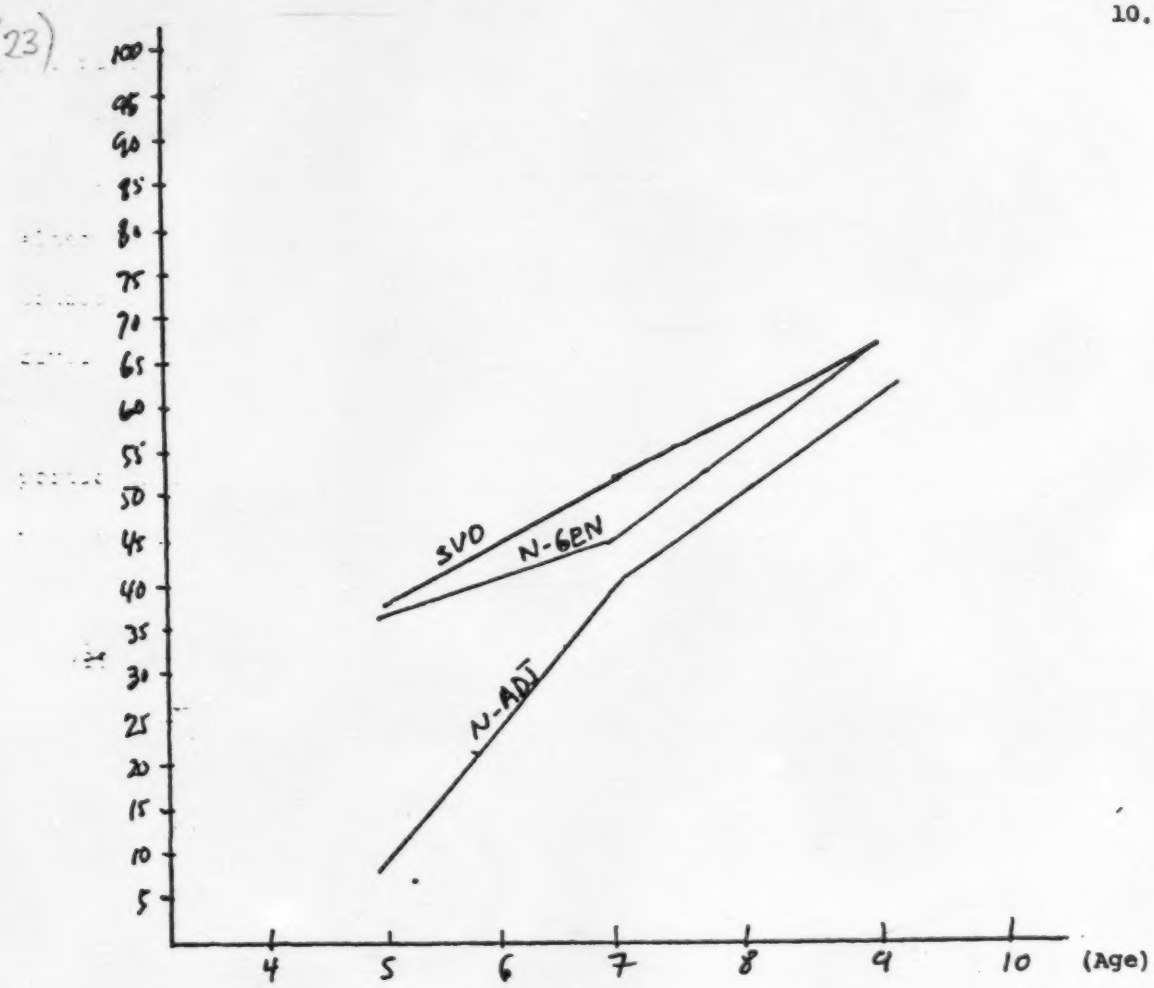
Here is a rapid increase of occurrence of the Spanish postnominal modifier at age 9, which develops from an almost total predominance of the Quechua prenominal ADjective at age 5. By comparing the percentages, this age level from tables (21) and (22), one must conclude that the postnominal Genitives must have emerged earlier than the postnominal adjective.

Although the data does not allow us to firmly establish the existence of an early stage of Peruvian Spanish with the characteristics initally assumed, it seems reasonable to postulate such a stage for children under 5, whose first language is exclusively Quechua. This assumption would be consistent with Cerrón-Palomino's observations of adult Quechua speakers, who totally reproduce Quechua word order when they first learn Spanish. The quantitative analysis of the data, on the other hand, gives full support to the set of hypotheses delineated by the principle of Universal Consistency formulated by Hawkins. The analysis establishes that the sequence of changes

introduced by the learning of prestige Spanish remains within the bounds dictated by syntactic universals (Greenberg 1966, Hawkins 1979). These would be violated if the bilingual Peruvian child would first develop the Spanish N-GEN word order before its V-medial clause order. However, the emergence of the SVO order precedes that of the N-GEN order, according to our findings, and they both in turn precede that of the postnominal adjective.

Another important result is that we could confirm that in each case the initiation of the acquired changes proceeds via doubling, i.e. the occurrence of two alternative orderings, thereby fully supporting Hawkins' DAH. Our results are also consistent with his CCH, which predicts a sequence of changes moving progressively towards more preferred language types. Finally, our analysis seems to corroborate Hawkins' Frequency Increase Hypothesis (FIH), which predicts a proportional increase in the frequency of co-occurring innovative patterns. This may be more clearly seen by plotting our average percentages in a graphic display, as shown in (23):

(23)



Rate of emergence of Spanish word orders

5. Additional considerations.

The results of our analysis are in accord with our initial expectations stemming from the observation of doubling orders in the speech of individual children, and the predominance of the ADJ-N pattern in children who were alternatively using prenominal (and postnominal) genitives. The fact about the adjective postion may be shown to be theoretically crucial. For when the addition of the ADJ-position change is added in the sequence of changes predicted by the opposing theories compared, it results in an implausible sequence for the one requiring an initial violation, but not for the one following the principle of Universal Consistency.

In the sequence predicted by the trigger-chain hypothesis, the change in the Adj position would have to follow that of the SOV-to-SVO change. This addition is

shown in (14'):

(14')

(a)	*(b)	(c)	(d)
SOV	SOV	SVO	SVO
PREP	PREP	PREP	PREP
GEN-N	*N-GEN	N-GEN	N-GEN
ADJ-N	ADJ-N	ADJ-N	N-ADJ
(Amharic)	(No languages)	(Modern Greek, Dutch Icelandic, Slavonic, Efik, Krefj, Maya.)	(Romance languages Albanian, West Atlantic languages, Yoruba, Bantu languages, etc.)

A sequence such as (14') is difficult to envisage within the framework of the trigger-chain hypothesis, given that the postulated violation, brought about initially in the genitive phrase, could be more economically cancelled out by the addition of merely one single change, namely, that of the Adjective position. This conclusion is supported by the existence of SOV languages with both postnominal genitives and adjectives, such as Persian, Iraqwi (Cushitic), Kahmti (Thai) and Akkadian (Greenberg 1966, Hawkins 1979). Thus, for the trigger-change theory, the SOV to SVO change results superfluous and unmotivated on internal grounds.

Within the progression favoring the universal-consistency hypothesis, on the other hand, the innovation in the ADJ position would come right after that in the Genitive phrase, both being subsequent changes in the order of the noun phrase constituents, as shown in (15'):

(15')

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
SOV	SOV/SVO	SVO	SVO
PREP	PREP	PREP	PREP
GEN-N	GEN-N	GEN-N/N-GEN	N-GEN
ADJ-N	ADJ-N	ADJ-N	ADJ-N/N-ADJ
(Amharic)	(Swedish, Danish)	(Modern Greek, Dutch, Icelandic, Slavonic, Efik, Krefj, Maya)	(Romance languages, Albanian, West Atlantic languages, Yoruba, Bantu languages, etc.)

Here the change in ADJ position fits well in a sequence which is both

plausible and consistent with the CCH. For the additional change in the ADJ position constitutes a move towards a highly preferred language type, as evidenced by the larger number of existing languages for the successive stages.

6. Conclusions.

This study brings light into areas little studied in Peruvian Spanish, namely, that of basic word orders and the stages observed in the acquisition of those of standard Spanish. It furthers a thesis about the order of acquisition of two types of word orders, which has implications concerning two current and opposing theories of linguistic change. In particular, it provides evidence that linguistic innovations are constrained by the observance of linguistic universals. At the same time it shows how two syntactically polar languages interact in the contact situation. The word order acquisition stages postulated also have important implications in the study of variability in Peruvian Spanish, which has long been recognized to be directly dependent upon the degree of influence of Quechua, as already pointed out by Escobar 1978. There are clear indications that features characterizing each stage may be kept as variable styles in the adult's speech, along with the standard norm, which may be used as a formal style. Finally, the findings here reported will have obvious pedagogical consequences for the teaching of standard Spanish in the bilingual programs in Perú.

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